

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. A method, operable in a data processing system attached to a network, and comprising steps of:
 - 5 receiving, from a user, a request to perform a first transaction through the network;
associating a first false persona with the transaction, wherein the first false persona is selected from a plurality of false personas so as to achieve an advantage for the user with respect to the first transaction; and
 - 10 executing the first transaction under the guise of the first false persona so as to avoid revealing the user's identity.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the first transaction includes purchasing a product, and wherein the product includes one of a good and a service.
3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
 - 15 selecting the first false persona so as to prevent the product's being offered to the user at a price that is targeted at the user.
4. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
selecting the first false persona so as to encourage the product's being offered to the user at a price that is targeted to the first false persona.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving an instruction from the user to select the first false persona from the plurality of false personas.
6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
5 associating a second false persona with a second transaction; and
executing the second transaction under the guise of the second false persona so as to avoid revealing the user's identity and so as to avoid revealing an association between the second transaction and the first transaction.
7. The method of claim 6, wherein the second transaction is related to the first
10 transaction.
8. The method of claim 6, wherein the first transaction includes purchasing a first product and the second transaction includes purchasing a second product, and wherein the first product and the second product each include at least one of a good and a service.
9. The method of claim 8, wherein the first product and the second product are
15 identical products.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein the first transaction includes participating in an online auction.
11. The method of claim 1, wherein the transaction is sending a message.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the message is one of an electronic mail message, a newsgroup post, a message forum post, and an instant message.
13. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving a message associated with the false persona; and
5 performing a dispositive action with respect to the message, wherein the dispositive action includes at least one of discarding the message and forwarding the message to the user.
14. The method of claim 13, wherein the message is one of an electronic mail message, a newsgroup post, and an instant message.
- 10 15. The method of claim 1, wherein the user is one of a plurality of users that are associating with the first false persona.
16. A computer program product in a computer readable medium, comprising instructions for:
receiving, from a user, a request to perform a first transaction through a network;
15 associating a first false persona with the transaction, wherein the first false persona is selected from a plurality of false personas so as to achieve an advantage for the user with respect to the first transaction; and
executing the first transaction under the guise of the first false persona so as to avoid revealing the user's identity.
- 20 17. The computer program product of claim 16, wherein the first transaction includes purchasing a product, and wherein the product includes one of a good and a service.

18. The computer program product of claim 17, comprising additional instructions for:
selecting the first false persona so as to prevent the product's being offered to the user at a price that is targeted at the user.

5 19. The computer program product of claim 17, comprising additional instructions for:
selecting the first false persona so as to encourage the product's being offered to the user at a price that is targeted to the first false persona.

20. The computer program product of claim 16, comprising additional instructions for:
receiving an instruction from the user to select the first false persona from the plurality of false personas.

21. The computer program product of claim 16, comprising additional instructions for:
15 associating a second false persona with a second transaction; and
executing the second transaction under the guise of the second false persona so as to avoid revealing the user's identity and so as to avoid revealing an association between the second transaction and the first transaction.

22. The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the second transaction is
20 related to the first transaction.

23. The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the first transaction includes purchasing a first product and the second transaction includes purchasing a second product, and wherein the first product and the second product each include at least one of a good and a service.

5 24. The computer program product of claim 23, wherein the first product and the second product are identical products.

25. The computer program product of claim 16, wherein the first transaction includes participating in an online auction.

26. The computer program product of claim 16, wherein the transaction is sending a
10 message.

27. The computer program product of claim 26, wherein the message is one of an electronic mail message, a newsgroup post, a message forum post, and an instant message.

28. The computer program product of claim 16, comprising additional instructions
15 for:

receiving a message associated with the false persona; and
performing a dispositive action with respect to the message, wherein the dispositive action includes at least one of discarding the message and forwarding the message to the user.

29. The computer program product of claim 28, wherein the message is one of an electronic mail message, a newsgroup post, and an instant message.

30. The computer program product of claim 16, wherein the user is one of a plurality of users that are associated with the first false persona.

5 31. A data processing system comprising:

a bus system;

a processing unit connected to the bus system, wherein the processing unit includes at least one processor;

memory connected to the bus system;

10 a network adapter connected to the bus system, wherein the network adapter connects to a network; and

a set of instructions

wherein the processing unit executes the set of instructions to perform the acts of: receiving, from a user, a request to perform a first transaction through the

15 network;

associating a first false persona with the transaction, wherein the first false persona is selected from a plurality of false personas so as to achieve an advantage for the user with respect to the first transaction; and executing the first transaction under the guise of the first false persona so as to avoid revealing the user's identity.

20 32. The data processing system of claim 31, wherein the first transaction includes purchasing a product, and wherein the product includes one of a good and a service.

33. The data processing system of claim 32, wherein the processing unit executes the set of instructions to perform the additional acts of:

selecting the first false persona so as to prevent the product's being offered to the user at a price that is targeted at the user.

5 34. The data processing system of claim 32, wherein the processing unit executes the set of instructions to perform the additional acts of:

selecting the first false persona so as to encourage the product's being offered to the user at a price that is targeted to the first false persona.

10 35. The data processing system of claim 31, wherein the processing unit executes the set of instructions to perform the additional acts of:

receiving an instruction from the user to select the first false persona from the plurality of false personas.

36. The data processing system of claim 31, wherein the processing unit executes the set of instructions to perform the additional acts of:

15 associating a second false persona with a second transaction; and
executing the second transaction under the guise of the second false persona so as to avoid revealing the user's identity and so as to avoid revealing an association between the second transaction and the first transaction.

20 37. The data processing system of claim 36, wherein the second transaction is related to the first transaction.

38. The data processing system of claim 36, wherein the first transaction includes purchasing a first product and the second transaction includes purchasing a second product, and wherein the first product and the second product each include at least one of a good and a service.

5 39. The data processing system of claim 38, wherein the first product and the second product are identical products.

40. The data processing system of claim 31, wherein the first transaction includes participating in an online auction.

10 41. The data processing system of claim 31, wherein the transaction is sending a message.

42. The data processing system of claim 41, wherein the message is one of an electronic mail message, a newsgroup post, a message forum post, and an instant message.

15 43. The data processing system of claim 31, wherein the processing unit executes the set of instructions to perform the additional acts of:

receiving a message associated with the false persona; and

performing a dispositive action with respect to the message, wherein the dispositive action includes at least one of discarding the message and forwarding the message to the user.

44. The data processing system of claim 43, wherein the message is one of an electronic mail message, a newsgroup post, and an instant message.
45. The data processing system of claim 31, wherein the user is one of a plurality of users that are associating with the first false persona.

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